

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – April 9-13, 2012
Bill Newell, Principal Washington School for the Deaf

The name of the law that initially led to mainstreaming as a predominant educational option for the majority of deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

- a) Education of All Handicapped Children Act
- b) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- c) Americans with Disabilities Act
- d) Vocational Rehabilitation Act

Answer: “a” – The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) of 1975 was the first federal legislation to guarantee a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities. This legislation later became renamed as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The intention of this law was to standardize the way education was provided to all children with disabilities. The major idea within this legislation that worked to the detriment of residential schools for the deaf was the notion that children should be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The assumption for most children with disabilities, for example, children with cognitive challenges, children with mobility challenges etc. was that they should be educated within “the mainstream” and “with children who did not have disabilities.” The impetus behind this legislation was to get mentally disabled children out of institutions to be educated with their non-handicapped peers. Of course for deaf children often education with their hearing peers in regular education classrooms is the “most restrictive environment” because for deaf children a major obstacle in these environments is communication with their teachers and classmates. For many deaf and hard-of-hearing children in mainstream environments communication with teachers and classmates must be facilitated via an ASL-English interpreter. This makes all communication and learning indirect and by definition more restrictive. (Read more about the Education of All Handicapped Children Act here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_for_All_Handicapped_Children_Act)

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